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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 002026

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE, D. TEITELBAUM
PARIS FOR C. NEARY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [TSPL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MUGABE TONES DOWN RHETORIC IN STATE OF THE NATION
ADDRESS

REF: HARARE 1913 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell under Section 1.5 b/d

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: In his State of the Nation speech to Parliament December 9, Mugabe avoided direct attacks on the U.S., U.K., and other western critics of his government, lauded the supposed economic rebound, and said upcoming Parliamentary elections would be nonviolent and meet SADC principles. The speech had little of note in its content but was significantly more moderate in tone than last year's speech. END SUMMARY.

Foreign Policy: Why Can't We All Just Get Along

¶12. (SBU) President Mugabe's 2004 State of the Nation address made before Parliament on December 9 was notable in its markedly different tone in comparison to last year's address and other presidential speeches of the past few years. (Embassy has faxed a full text of the speech to AF/S.) Foreign policy references in the speech were bland, especially compared to last year when Mugabe blasted the &unholy Anglo-Saxon alliance⁸ and its opposition to Zimbabwe's land reform and support for the war in Iraq. This time around there were negative comments, but they were more general in nature and not specifically targeted at the U.S., the U.K., or any other Western governments. Mugabe said he wanted to draw the world's attention to the &hostile machinations of our detractors⁸ and to the need for Zimbabwe to condemn &illegal acts of aggression perpetrated by some powerful nations against smaller states.⁸

¶13. (SBU) After noting the &defeat⁸ of the Zimbabwe human rights resolution at the UN, Mugabe said, &we seek no enmity from any quarter whatsoever. We seek only friendship with everyone, and any nation, provided, of course, there is unconditional recognition of our sovereign right to determine our own future and destiny.⁸

The Stupid Economy

¶14. (SBU) The &economic rebound⁸ took a prominent position at the start of the speech. Mugabe painted a rosy, if wildly inaccurate, picture of abundant rains, a five-fold increase in exports, reduced inflation and a slowing decline in GDP. All of these accomplishments he attributed to the regime's felicitous policies.

¶15. (SBU) He also proposed a new national &biotechnology policy⁸ and the establishment of a National Biotechnology Authority to manage &sustainable development and the application of biotechnology consistent with relevant multilateral protocols.⁸ (Comment: Zimbabwe has been on the fault line of the global debate on biotechnology. Biotech has a constituency among Zimbabwe's sophisticated but dwindling scientific and agro-business community and field trials of GM corn and cotton are being conducted here. Nonetheless, Zimbabwe rejected all but milled GM food assistance last year over trade and environmental concerns after a heated internal debate. End comment.)

Parliamentary Elections

¶16. (SBU) Mugabe also discussed the upcoming March Parliamentary elections early on in the speech but moved off the topic quickly. He restated the Government's commitment to nonviolent elections and said the elections were an opportunity for the government to &seek renewed mandates.⁸ Mugabe claimed recent amendments to the electoral law had made Zimbabwe compliant with SADC standards and guidelines, but he stated that outside observers for the elections would be by &invitation⁸ only and would not include countries hostile to Zimbabwe.

Comment

17. (C) Mugabe seems ever more confident in his and ZANU-PF's position in the upcoming elections and is trying to project a more moderate--if not more accommodating--face to both domestic and international audiences. Local observers have noted a sharp break in ZANU-PF rhetoric, especially since the recent Party Congress. One element of this has been a noticeable softening of the regime's anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric of late. That said, we do not yet see any indication of significant policy changes in the offing (reftel) that would address U.S. and international concerns, and take every opportunity to tell our GOZ and ZANU-PF interlocutors that the rhetoric is nice but we're waiting to be shown the beef.

DELL